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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 003190

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: KUWAITI FOREIGN MINISTER ON ARAB LEAGUE, IRAQ, JAZEERA, AND G-8 DIALOGUE

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.5(b) and (d)

1. (U) In a forty-five minute meeting on September 15, the morning after arrival in country, Ambassador LeBaron presented copies of credentials to Foreign Minister Shaikh Muhammad Al-Sabah. The Foreign Minister was joined by Undersecretary Khalid Jarallah, Office Director Shaikh Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the Acting Chief of Protocol. Ambassador LeBaron was accompanied by DCM.

2. (C) Shaikh Muhammad did not stand on ceremony and engaged at length in informal discussion of issues of interest, including a readout of the just concluded Arab League Foreign Ministers meeting in Cairo. He credited Jordan and the GCC states with beating back a strong Syrian push to criticize UNSCR 1559. It was unacceptable, he said, to undermine UNSC resolutions, but he noted that Kuwait and others thought 1559 bordered on an intrusion into internal political affairs in Lebanon and that a three-year extension of the term of office of the Lebanese president did not rise to a "threat to international peace and security". The Iraqi Foreign Minister had made a good presentation and received support for his call on neighboring states to refrain from meddling in Iraqi affairs. Darfur had been discussed as had the Arab-Israeli issue, with little to report.

3. (C) The Foreign Minister termed himself an optimist on Iraq but said he did not believe the current situation boded well for holding elections in January. For elections to have a positive outcome, there needed to be social peace and a greater atmosphere of trust among competing groups. From his perspective, Iraqi ethnic and sectarian groups were still drawing lines and fighting for turf and were not ready to craft a common national agenda. This was nothing new for Iraq though. Shaikh Muhammad thought it would be difficult to impose another model on the reality of Iraqi society. Nonetheless, Kuwait was working hard to support the IIG, thought PM Allawi was on the right track, and had recently allocated \$65 million for school and hospital projects with \$5 million earmarked for Najaf. Retired Chief of Staff General Ali al-Mumin, head of the Kuwait Humanitarian Operations Center, would be traveling to Najaf to oversee projects there. The GOK viewed Sistani as a moderating influence and applauded the efforts of Allawi to starve Muqtada al-Sadr of "political oxygen".

4. (C) In welcoming the Ambassador to Kuwait and encouraging enjoyment of Kuwaiti hospitality and openness, Shaikh Muhammad said the Ambassador would hear a lot of strong views against the Jazeera Satellite Channel. U.S. counterterrorism focus was on those "holding the guns" but not enough attention was being paid to those conveying a message of hatred, and al-Jazeera was a major source of the hatred that led young men into terrorist activity. The GOK made its views known to the Qatari leadership, but saw no change.

5. (C) Shaikh Muhammad said he would be leaving for New York on September 17 and looked forward to seeing the Secretary in the meeting with GCC FM's. He indicated some confusion about substantive agenda for the proposed September 24 G8 Ministers meeting with regional Foreign Ministers. DCM noted that oral invitation and non-paper on agenda had been passed to MFA Americas Director Khalid Babbain and that it was our hope that Shaikh Muhammad would accept the invitation to attend.

6. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
LeBaron